

# HORRIBLE SUPERSTITION OF THE VANDOUX HERETICS, OR SNAKE- WORSHIPPERS OF HAITI.

We translate, from the *Opinion National*, the following account of an extraordinary secret and cannibal sect, stated to have been in existence in the negro community of Haiti for upwards of sixty years past—a horrible superstition, which, through continuous misgovernment and defective education in that fine West Indian island, appears unhappily to have greatly increased in numbers and influence during the last twenty years. The account is obviously authentic, and will, we think, be read with interest by our readers, as presenting grave and terrible facts for the consideration of all students of psychology and political economy.

“Do you know what the Vandoux Sect is? Are you aware of the nature of the religion of the Emperor Soulouque—of the Law of the Adder or Serpent? The catechism of this sect—born on the soil of Africa, and spread abroad through most of the colonies—is of a very primitive simplicity. It is summed up in these seven commandments:—

1. Thou shalt adore the Serpent (*I Couleuvre*).

2. Thou shalt blindly obey the orders which it (the Serpent) shall give thee by the mouth of the Papa-loi, his high priest

3. Thou shalt not approach it with empty hands—so that it may grant thee what thou desirest.

4. Thou shalt never betray the secret of the mysteries.

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5. Thou shalt dance in a state of intoxication round the Holy Arch of the Serpent.

6. Thou shalt sacrifice to the Serpent she-goats, fowls, and, if possible, children.

7. Thou shalt drink the blood and eat the flesh of the victim.

The existence of the seventh commandment has long been doubted; so faithfully has the secret of the Vaudoux been kept; but, at length, the truth has been made manifest. The eye of the law has penetrated into the midst of the bloody mysteries of this religious cannibalism, against which all the teachings of Catholicism have remained powerless; for it is a circumstance strange and worthy of serious thought that the worshippers of the Serpent are all Catholics and sons of Catholics; men who frequent the churches, tell the beads of the rosary, adore the holy images and relics, burn wax candles before images of the Virgin, and make a plentiful use of holy water. Let us state what has been discovered.

It was in the middle of last December, at Bizoton, near the very gates of the capital of the Haitian Republic, that an individual named Congo Gellé received from the Vaudoux god the order that he should offer a human sacrifice unto that deity. At such a cost good fortune was to visit his humble home. In concert with his sister, Jeanne Gellé, Congo thus resolved to sacrifice to the Serpent his own niece, little Claircine, daughter of Clair Gellé, a child between seven and eight years of age. The young girl was taken, on the 27th of December, to the house of a man named Julien Nicolas, who—seconded by other adepts, Floreal, Guerrier, and a woman named Beyard—tied the child's arms and legs. Claircine was then carried away to the house of Floreal, and put into a mysterious place, called "Humfort," in the language of the initiated. There she remained for four days, and on Wednesday, the 30th of December, at ten o'clock at night, the victim was again carried off to the house of Congo Gellé. The time for the horrible sacrifice was come.

Jeanne Gelle seized her niece by the neck and strangled her, whilst Floreal pressed her ribs and Guerrier held her feet. The corpse was stretched out on the ground, and Floreal skinned it with a knife, after he had cut off the head. This operation was scarcely finished before Jeanne Gelle, Floreal, Guerrier, Congo, Nereine (wife of Floreal), Julien Nicolas, and the women Roseida and Beyard rushed on the body of the victim—devoured the still palpitating flesh, and drank the yet warm blood.

After this horrible feast, the cannibals repaired to the house of Floreal with the head of poor Claircine, off which, having boiled it with yams, they ate the fleshy parts. The skull, thus divested of flesh, having been placed on the altar, Jeanne rang a little bell, and the adepts executed a religious dance—encircling the altar and singing a sacred song—probably the famous Vaudoux hymn :—

“ Eh ! Eh ! bomba ! hen ! hen !

Canga baffo te

Canga moune de le,

Canga de ki la

Canga li !”

The ceremony having ended, the skin and entrails of Claircine were buried near Floreal's house. Already, in vases which were to be carefully preserved, they had set aside as much of the blood of the victim as was left. As to the bones, they were reduced to ashes, for the pulverised remains of them were to be similarly preserved. The sacred task accomplished, the worshippers of the Serpent separated, agreeing to meet together again on the 6th of January (the Feast of the Epiphany), when a fresh sacrifice was to be offered. The victim, concealed in Floreal's house, was got ready for the sacrificial knife. It was, this time, a young girl, named Losama, whom Nereine had stolen on the main road of Leogane. The officers of justice were happily informed of the fact, and the man-eaters were condemned to death by a jury, and executed on the 6th or 7th of February last.

Let us hasten to observe that the adepts of the Vaudoux do not constitute in Haiti more than a little group of persons scattered in the midst of the mass of the population, and that as soon as the crime became known an immense indignation burst forth,—so much so that the guilty parties would have been torn to pieces at the moment of their arrest, had not an imposing military force kept the people at a distance. We may also add that, after the execution of the condemned, a loud cry arose from the multitude of “Long live the President Geffrard ! Civilization for ever !”

The Vaudoux sect has been condemned, proscribed, and subjected to severe penalties by all the Governments which have followed each other in Haiti since the war of independance. Toussaint-L'Ouverture forbade, by a decree dated the 4th of January, 1800, under pain of the bastinado and imprisonment, all the practices, the assemblies, and the dances of these sectaries. Dessalines, then no more than the lieutenant of Toussaint-L'Ouverture, had fifty of them killed with the bayonet in 1801, and, after he came to the throne, exerted himself to the utmost to clear the country of this shameful superstition.

The Vaudoux sect lost nearly all its credit under the enlightened Governments of Petion and Boyer, but the worst instincts of African barbarism showed themselves once more when Soulouque came into power, that chief being one of those affiliated to the Vaudoux sect—a worshipper of the serpent. A papaloi had predicted, in 1841, that he would be called upon to restore the imperial throne, and after the realization of the prophecy, Soulouque showed that he entertained a sense of the obligation. He openly protected the Vaudoux, and escaping sometimes out of his palace during the night, used to go and kiss the serpent and take part in the mysteries of this African mode of worship. The papalois were his councillors, and he made them go through frequent conjurations and absurd practices, with a view to obviate the effect of charms and witchcraft, supposed to have been put into force against himself and his family.

From that time forth the Vaudoux sect was considerably extended, and we see what it has come to now. May the Haitians, profiting by the great disclosure which has been made in their midst, give themselves up, for the future, only to enlightened guides, and may the President Geffrard be enabled to extirpate this horrible heresy! To be very strict against it is a duty; but, as regards sects, this principle is one which must not be forgotten—sects rarely give way to force. If a sect is persecuted, it concentrates its energies and envelopes itself in more profound obscurity, but still it persists. To overthrow the Vaudoux there is but one infallible means—one sovereign remedy—and that is the amplification of public instruction.—*Argus*.

The *Cologne Gazette* speaks of a strange crime which has just been committed in the town of Notherg, near Aix-la-Chapelle. Professor Kluxen had left his house, when another professor, M. Lang, rushed on him, and exclaiming, "We must both die," fired a pistol at his face, wounding him most dangerously. Then, taking from his pocket another pistol, M. Lang blew out his own brains. Both had played at cards together the night before and parted on the most friendly terms. Professor Kluxen lies in a desperate state.

A young chaplain had preached a sermon of great length. "Sir," said Lord Mulgrave, bowing to him, "there were some things in your sermon of to day I never heard before."—"Oh, my Lord!" said the flattered chaplain, "it is a common text, and I could not have hoped to have said anything new on the subject."—"I heard the clock strike twice," said Lord Mulgrave.

A rich Man's Freak.—The elder Rothschild once had need of the services of Liston, the celebrated English surgeon. After he had done, the banker said, "You think, perhaps, I am going to pay you for making me suffer so much; you are mistaken—you'll only get this souvenir" saying which he threw his nightcap at him. Liston smiled, took the night cap, but, as he was descending the stairs, he looked inside, and found a bundle of bank-notes.